



University of Chester



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Title: Teaching by story

Date: 9 July 2013

Originally given at: Warrington's Works Research Festival

Example citation: Rutherford. (2012). Teaching by story. Unpublished conference presentation given at Warrington's Works Research Festival at the University of Chester, United Kingdom.

Version of item: Given at conference

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/262655>

Teaching by Story

Rutherford – University of Chester

What is higher education 'for'?

It depends how we 'mentally picture',
or **IMAGinE** it...

What is higher education 'for'?



What is higher education 'for'?

The way in which we 'mentally picture',
it determines how we *define* it...

To define: "*to determine or fix the boundaries of*"
(from the Latin: 'to draw a line around')

Develop mental
faculties and powers

Foster awareness
and self-knowledge

Learning to learn

A ticket into a high
status, well paid post

Intellectual &
moral instruction

National advantage in a
global marketplace

Personal
fulfilment

Practical training
or instruction

Foster a respect
for knowledge

Disseminate
cultural & social
knowledge

Informed &
engaged citizens

Develop mental
faculties and powers

Foster awareness
and self-knowledge

Learning to learn

Intellectual &
moral instruction

A ticket into a high
status, well paid post

National advantage in a
global marketplace

Personal
fulfilment

Foster a respect
for knowledge

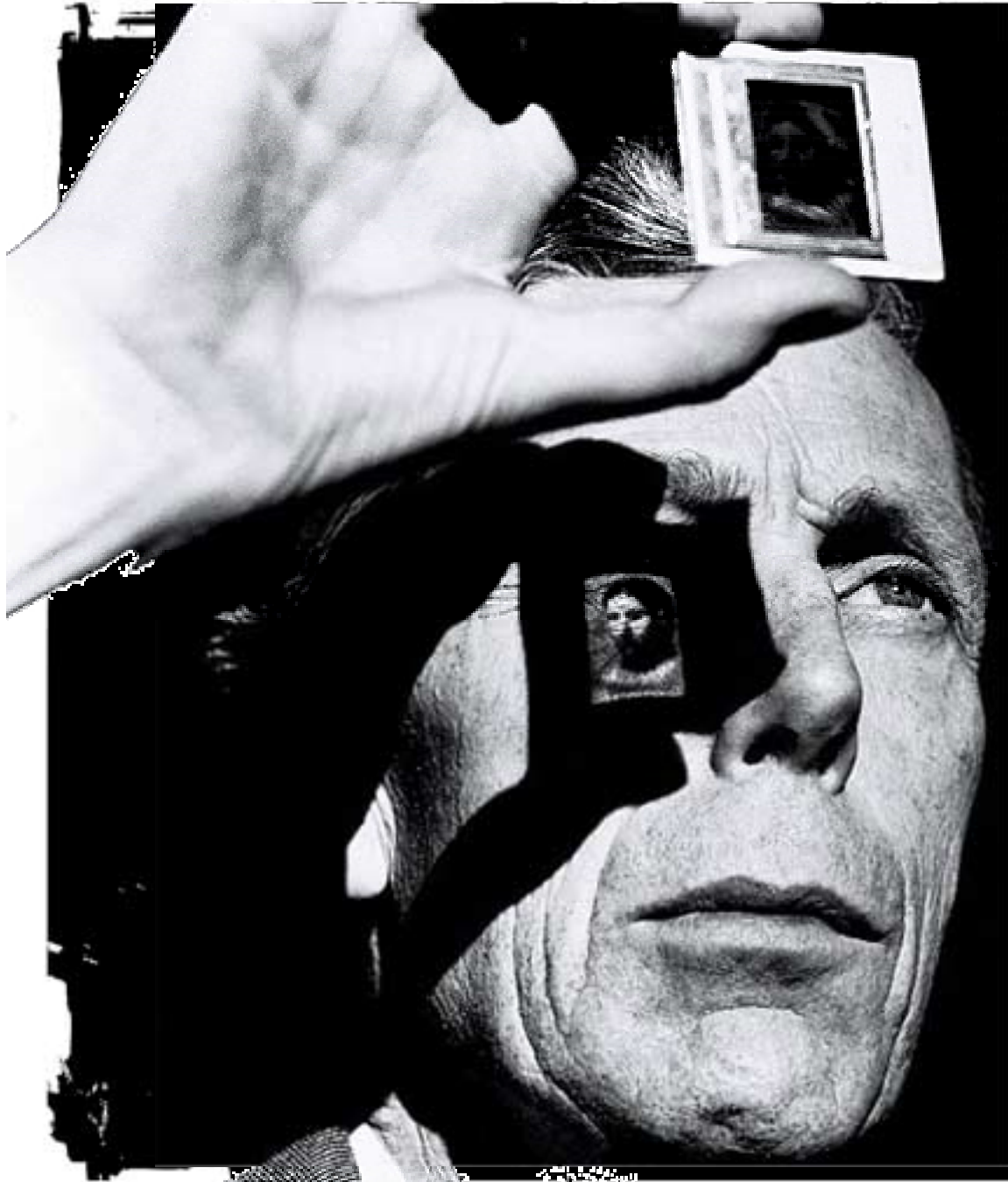
Practical training
or instruction

Disseminate
cultural & social
knowledge

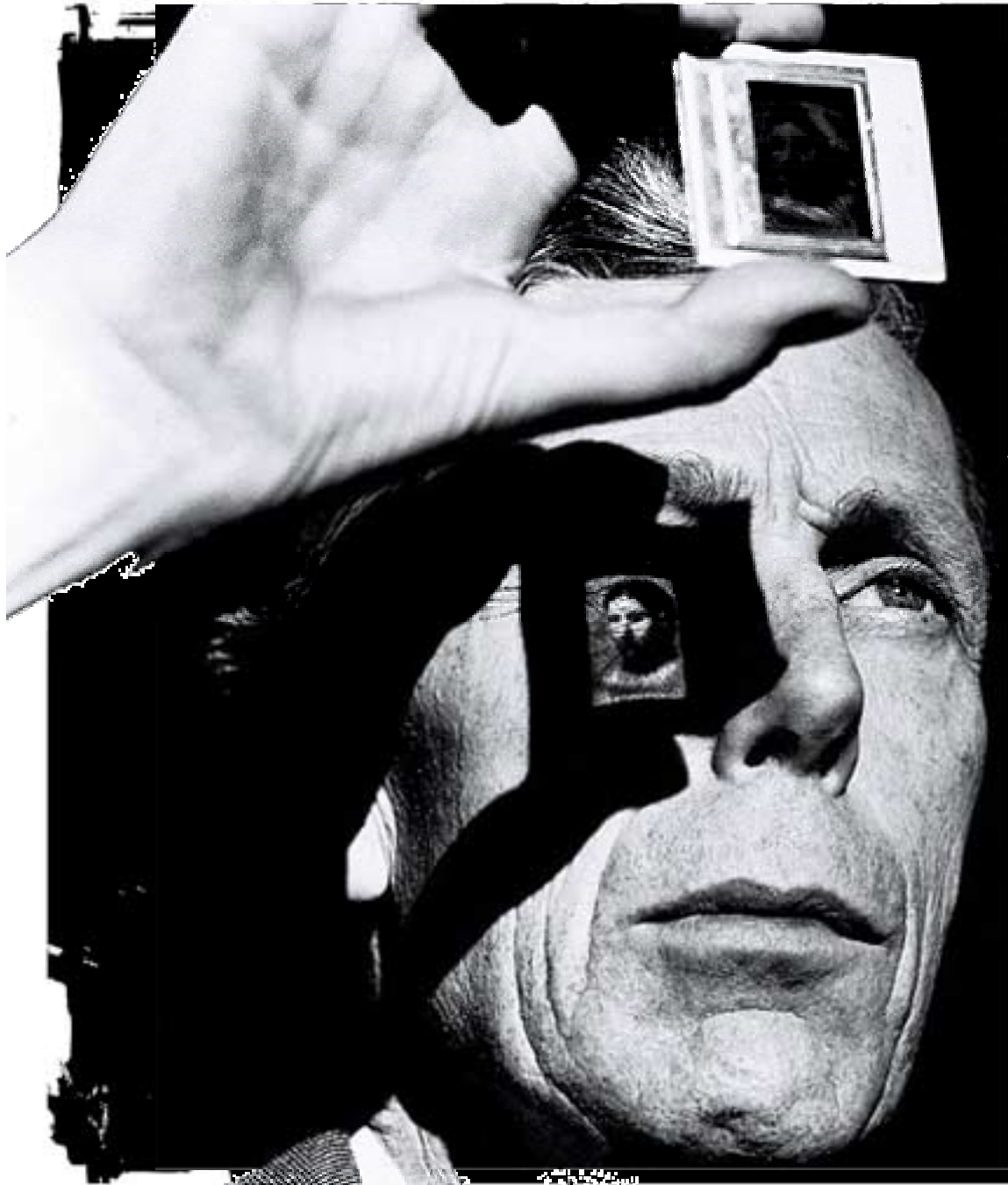
Informed &
engaged citizens

Two obstacles:

- i) the 'mental picture' of higher education with which many students arrive at university
- ii) the increasing focus on practical (job) skills and the necessity to ensure 'happy customers'



The use of 'mental pictures' is the oldest form of human cognition: our most basic way of knowing what something **is**



In other words, **what**
we think of [something]
is shaped by *the way*
that we **IMAGinE** it

Do you 'picture' Life as

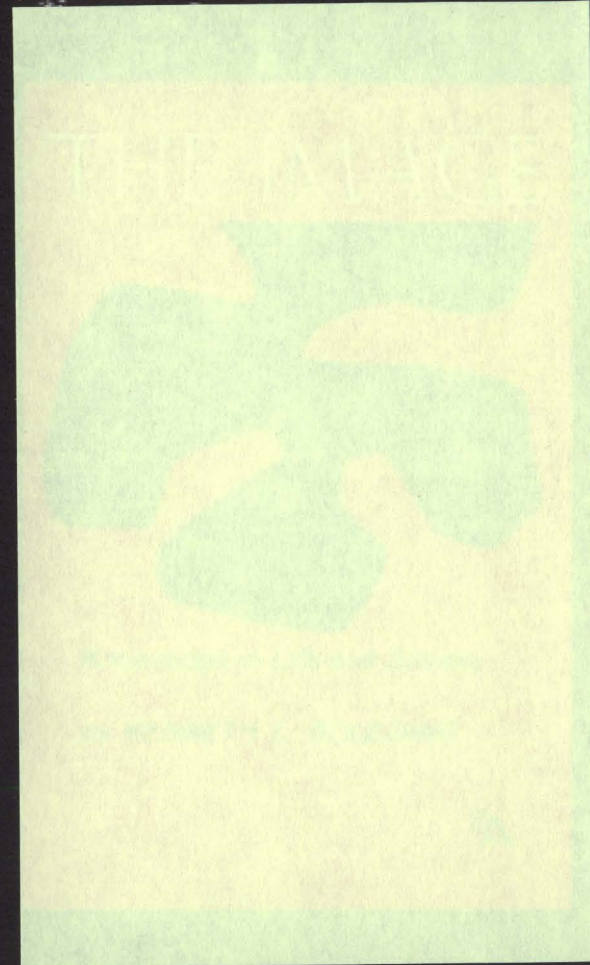
... 'a cornucopia of pleasures', 'a path to be explored',
'an opportunity to grow', 'an ordeal to be endured',
or 'a competition against hostile forces to be won'?

How do you 'picture' Success?

- As the accumulation of wealth and material possessions?
- The attainment of personal power or professional status?
- The possession of a beautiful, youthful body, capable of attracting the interest and attention of potential partners?
- The joy of being worthy of the love of those around you?

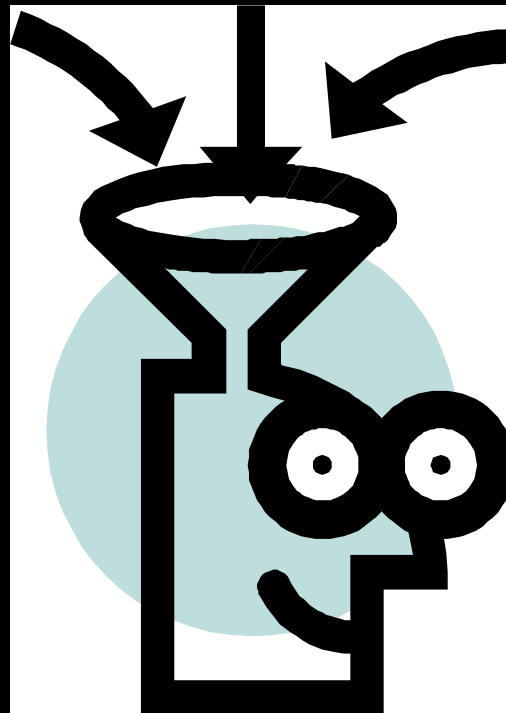
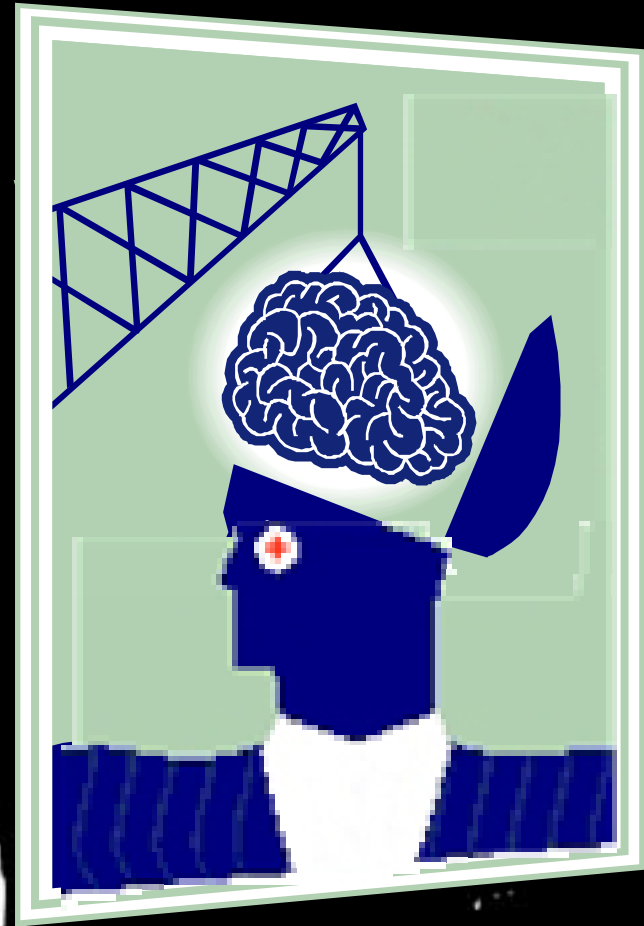
and the way in which we
IMAGInE it determines
what we think it is '**for**' –
and this in turn, shapes
the decisions we make in
our efforts to achieve it.

(Boulding, 1956)



... and **the decisions we make** give shape to both the life
we will lead – and the kind of world we will leave behind

mental pictures of HE:



Director of Sales and Student Recruitment

Employer: [REDACTED] UNIVERSITY

Posted: 20 June 2011

Location: [REDACTED]

Industry: Education - Higher, Sales -
Commercial, Senior executive -
Education

Contract: Permanent

Hours: Full Time

Salary: c. £75k



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The Market Model (HEA, 2010)

...locates students in higher education primarily as consumers, and is based on neoliberal thinking about the marketisation of education. From this perspective student engagement focuses primarily on ensuring consumer rights, hearing the consumer voice and about enhancing institutional market position

The Developmental Model (HEA, 2010)

...locates students as partners in a learning community, based on constructivist notions of learning such as the co-creation of knowledge by learners and teachers. [This] places greater emphasis on student growth and development and is primarily concerned with the quality of learning and the personal, mutual and social benefits that can be derived from engaging with [it]

Our graduates require:

The ability to *recognise, understand, think critically about* and to *express* the meaning and the implications of relevant information

The ability *and the inclination* to 'learn how to learn' in order to extend their knowledge, both for *their* benefit and that of *their employers*

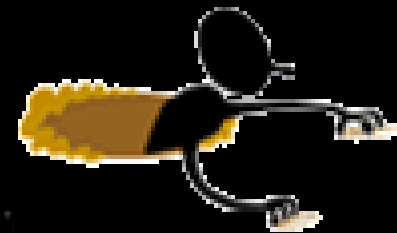
A dichotomy:

The pressure on programmes to concentrate on the provision of (and restrict assessment to the demonstration of) *practical skills*

But... industry demands graduates who can *reason* (*anticipate, understand & generate solutions for* diverse, complex problems)

[W]e must not fall into the trap of accepting as accurate a reading of students principally as consumers, demanding value for money, expecting 'satisfaction', passively receiving skills and knowledge [and] favouring above all else the easy acquisition of qualifications.

(Ramsden, 2008)



Suggestion:

Offer our students a different 'mental picture' of learning: one that helps 'make sense' – not just for their *careers* but for their *lives*

...one that allows them to 'see' education as learning how to make a life – not just a living

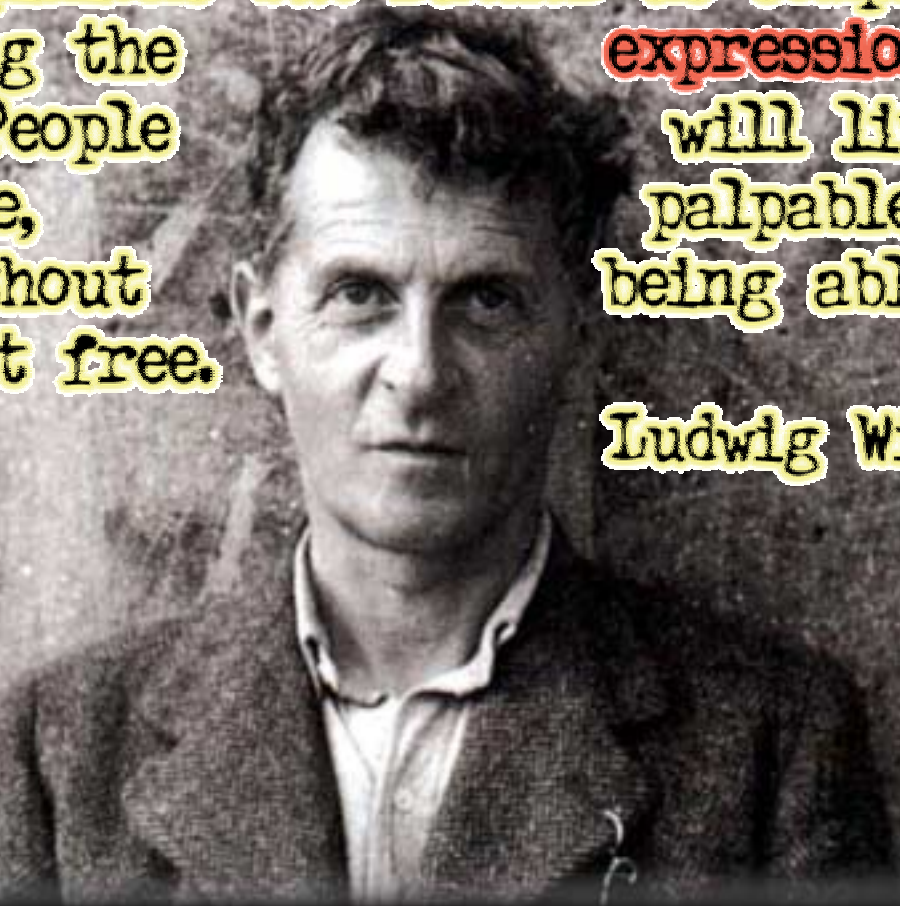
Suggestion:

To prepare them for the modern workplace, we must lead our students to 'see' HE as learning to *explore* and to *make meaning*

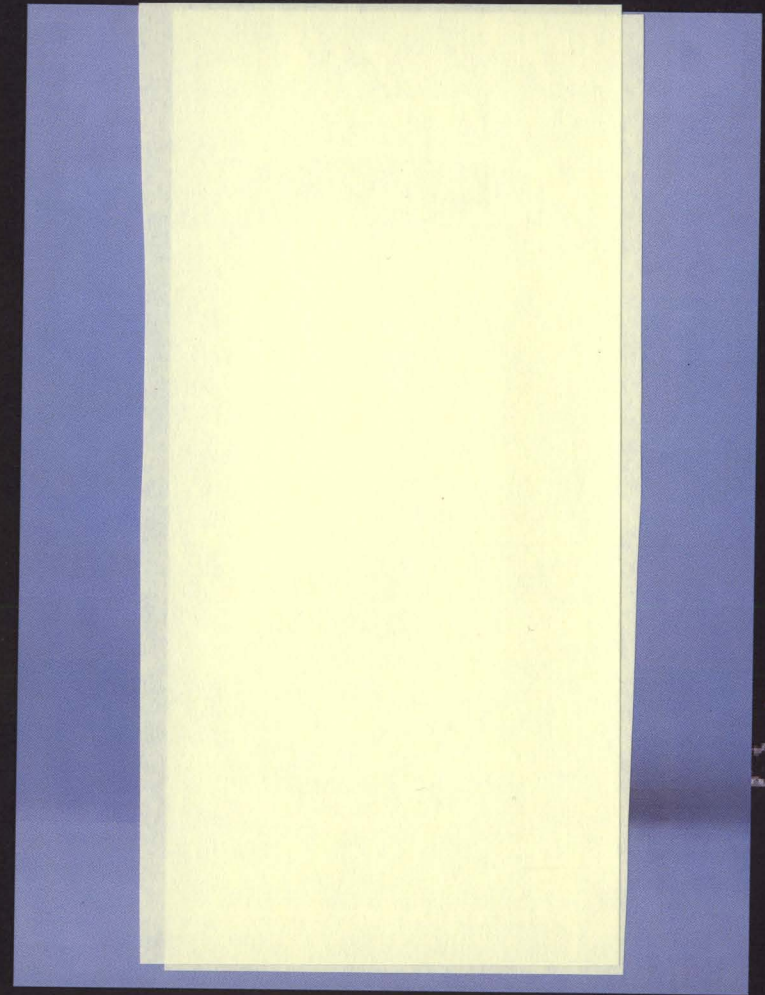
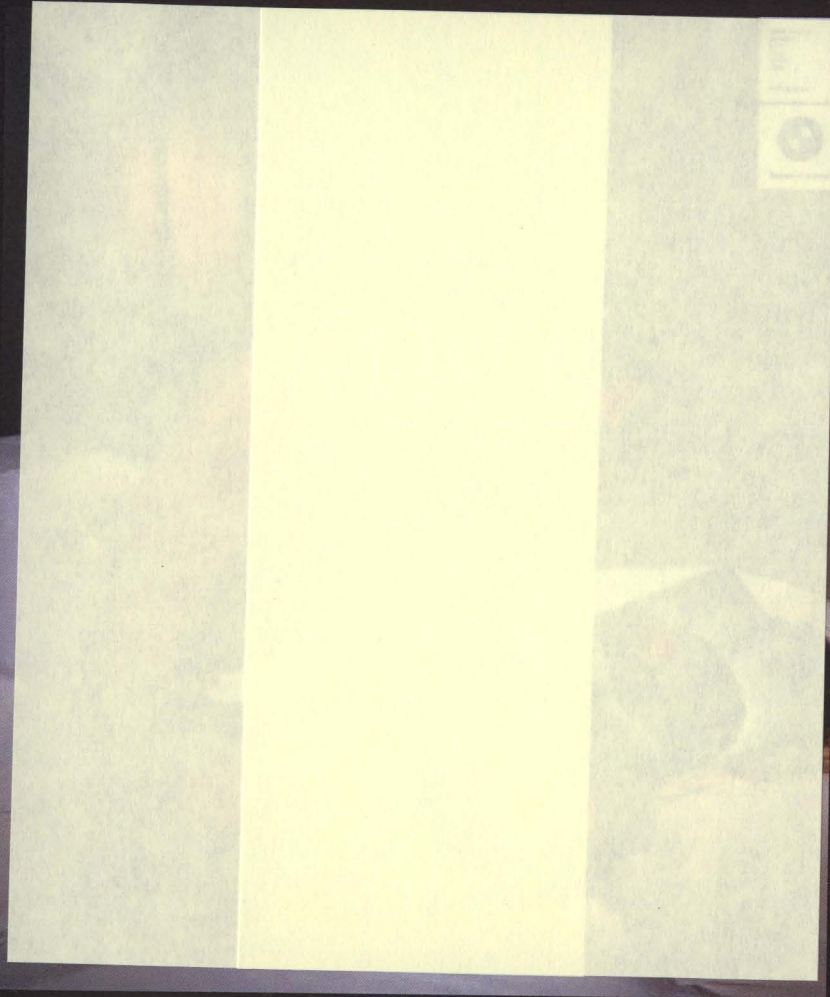
This exploration of the meaning of our subject can (should) include its language & images

The effect of making men think in accordance with dogmas, perhaps in the form of certain graphic propositions, will be very peculiar: I am not thinking of these dogmas as determining men's opinions but rather as completely controlling the expression of all opinions. People will live under an absolute, palpable tyranny, though without being able to say they are not free.

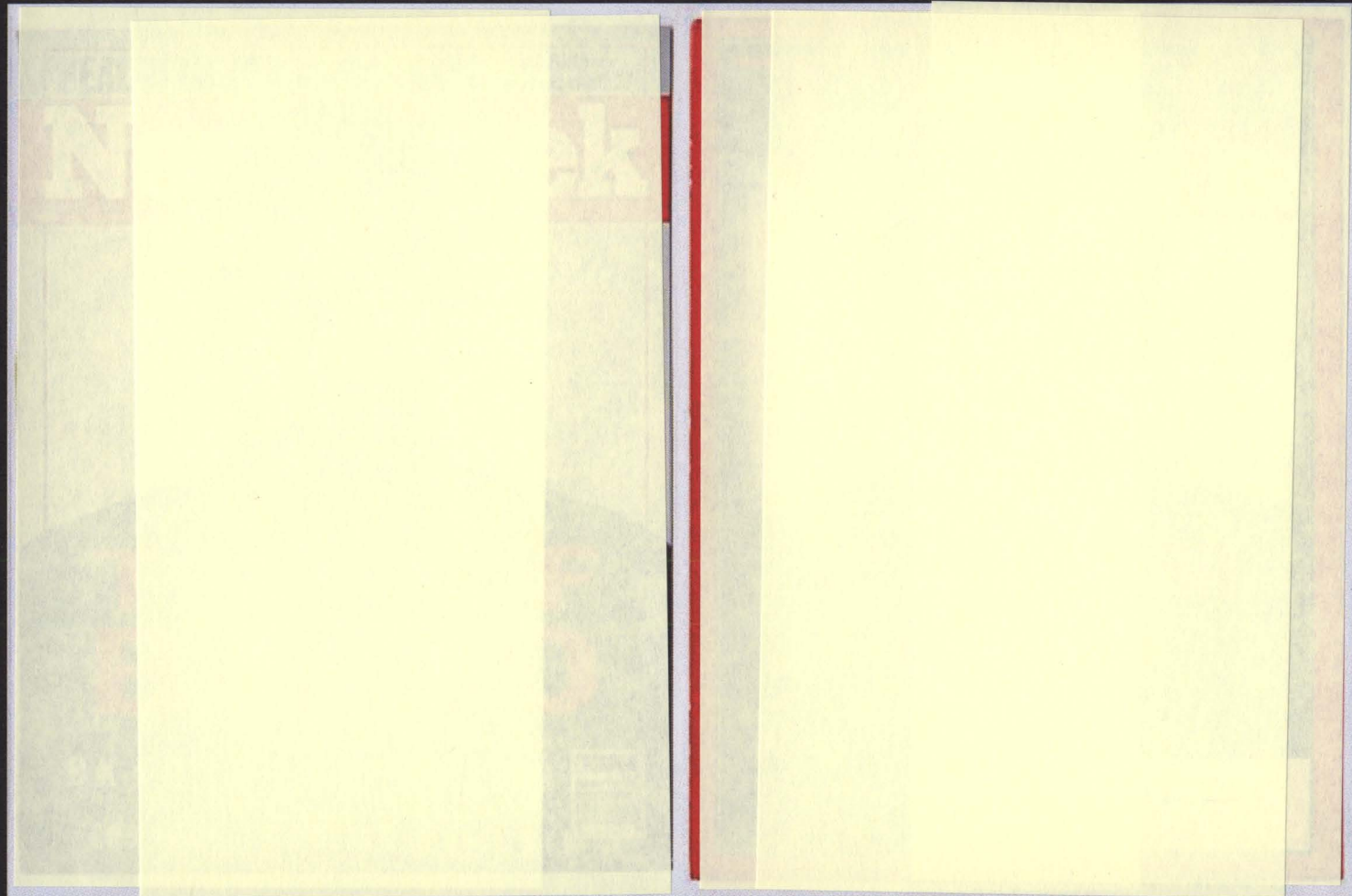
Ludwig Wittgenstein



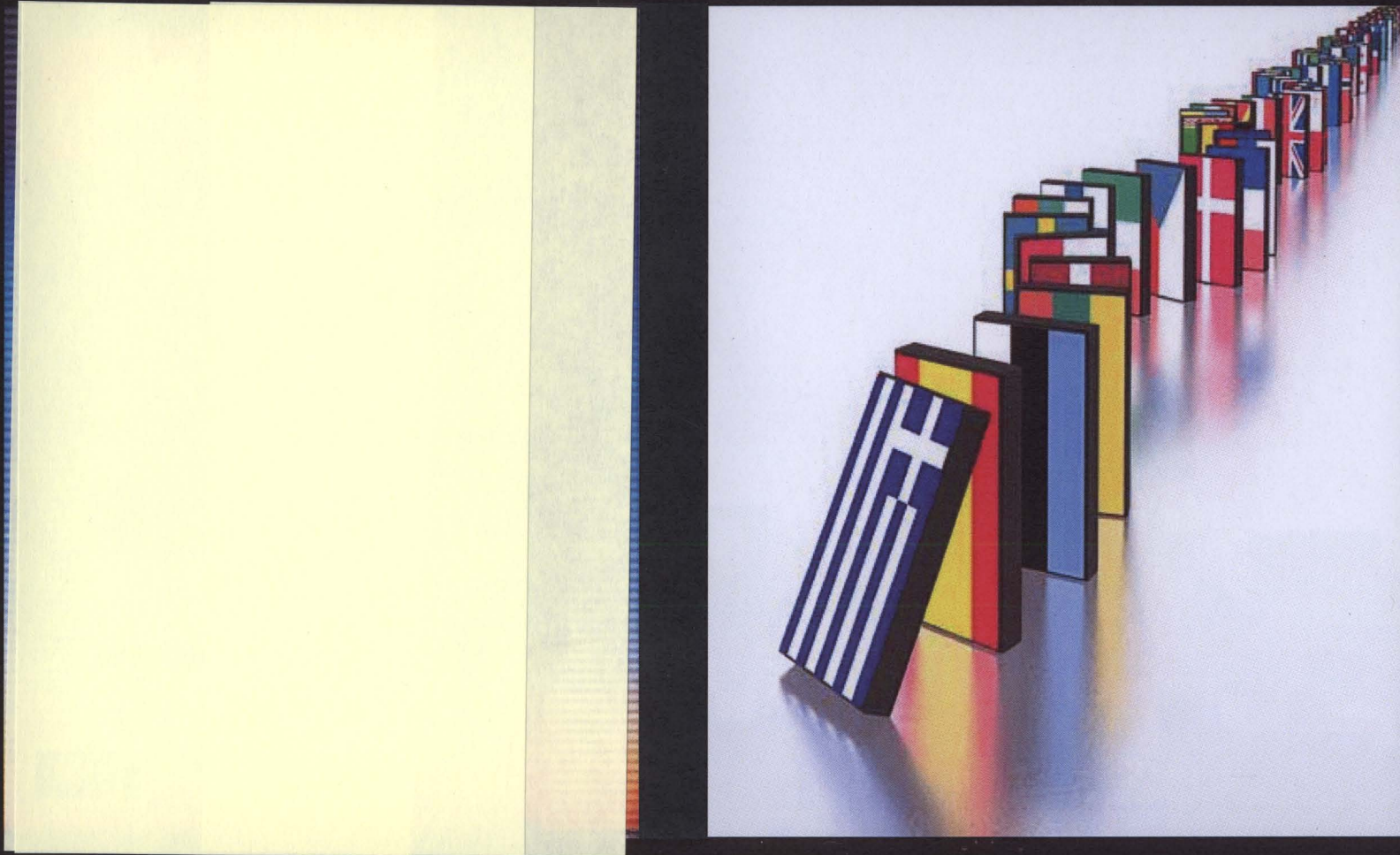
A few "graphic propositions"



"graphic propositions"



"graphic propositions"



"graphic propositions"



A final suggestion

As a consequence of most students' previous experience with assessment, it may be helpful to offer them a different 'mental picture' of the purpose of assignments.



Thank you

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